

BIDEFORD RURAL DISTRICT.

Annual Report

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health,

1915.

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TO THE
BIDEFORD RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, 1915.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to submit to you my Fifth Annual Report dealing with the Public Health and General Condition of the District during the year. This Report is not as full as usual, owing to the directions of the Local Government Board.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

LEONARD B. BETTS, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. (Lond.),

Medical Officer of Health.

Annual Report for 1915.

BIDEFORD RURAL DISTRICT.

Population. The Civil Population for the year 1915 has been estimated by the Registrar General at 6103, and the death-rate has therefore been calculated on that basis. It has been found impossible, owing to the shifting of population caused by the War, to make an exact estimate of population.

There are 14 parishes in the district.

SANITARY INSPECTIONS OF DISTRICT.

The Sanitary Inspector, Mr. H. D. Dack, reports that during the year there have been :—

- 630 Visits to premises and dwelling-houses.
- 42 Houses disinfected.
- 18 Notices for removal of nuisance injurious to Public Health.
- 10 Old wells cleaned out and protected.
- 3 New wells sunk.
- 10 New earth closets erected.
- 6 New W.C.
- 15 Old privies re-constructed into earth closets.
- 8 New drains.
- 12 Old drains re-constructed and repaired.
- 10 Samples of water taken for analysis.
- 37 Houses renovated.
- 3 Sets of plans passed by the Council.
- 2 New houses erected.

He also reports that he has visited and reported on the 10 registered dairies, 17 schools, 11 slaughter houses, 2 steam bakeries, and 1 steam laundry, and has attended to the cleaning out of the tanks at Abbotsham, Buckleigh Moor, Buckland Brewer, Parkham, Hartland and Woolsery.

SCHOOLS.

There are 17 Public Elementary Schools in the district. None of these were closed during the year on account of infectious illness. Meddon School has been closed for some months on account of the inability to obtain a head teacher. All are in good sanitary condition and the water supply is adequate. At one school, where there was a privy midden, earth closets have been substituted.

FOOD.

Milk Supply. There are 10 registered dairies in the district, all of which have been inspected during the year.

Other Foods. There are 11 slaughter houses in the district, all of which are well kept and regularly inspected. No case of diseased meat has been reported during the year.

WORKSHOPS.

There is a steam laundry at Buckleigh, employing 72 hands. This is kept in excellent sanitary condition.

HOUSING.

The following table shews the work done in 1915 under The Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations 1910 :—

No. of houses inspected for purposes of Sec. 17 of Act of 1909	No. of houses found unfit for habitation.	No. of Notices to Owners to Repair.	No. of Houses Repaired without Closing Orders.	General character of defects found
154	None	57	37	Rough stone floors Defective Plastering. Drainage. No closet accommodation. Wells unprotected

The general condition of the cottages in the district is improving, together with their surroundings, under the careful and systematic attention of the Sanitary Inspector. In a few cases, some delay has been experienced in carrying out repairs, owing to shortage of labour and difficulty in obtaining material.

RIVERS AND STREAMS.

Some pollution of the Bucks Mills stream, from the adjacent cottages, has been brought to my notice. The stream is about a mile long and is quite unimportant. The water of the stream is not used for domestic purposes, there being plenty of good drinking water available.

RAINFALL.

The total rainfall for the year 1915 at Melbury Reservoir was 54.11 inches as compared with 60.12 inches for the preceding year. The wettest months were February and December with a rainfall of 8.51 inches and 12.385 inches respectively. The driest months were March and June with a rainfall of less than 2 inches each, and 20 and 18 dry days respectively. (For these figures I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Harding, observer at Melbury Reservoir.)

SANITARY ADMINISTRATION OF DISTRICT.

- 1.—**Staff.** There is a whole time Sanitary Inspector.
- 2.—**Hospitals.** There is no Hospital accommodation in the district. Infectious cases from Abbotsham are admitted into the Bideford Borough Isolation Hospital.

Several meetings were held in June and July, by a Joint Committee from the Bideford Urban and Rural and Northam districts with reference to the provision of accommodation for possible cases of small pox; but no suitable site or building was available as a joint hospital for the three districts. It was suggested that, to avoid expense, shelters, such as those used for tuberculosis cases, might be used if the necessity arose.

3.—**Water.** Eight samples of water were examined. The water from the Council cottages was found to be fit for drinking purposes. The water from a well at Cross Park, Parkham, was found to be dirty, and to contain insects, and unfit for domestic use. The well was cleaned out and treated with permanganate of potash with satisfactory results.

Complaint was made of the Water from Littleham Village Pump and the sample examined was found to be unfit for drinking. The catchpit above the well has been cemented and cement put down in the water table in front of the well. The water is now much improved. The remainder of the samples examined were found to be good.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

There were 44 cases of infectious disease notified during the year, as compared with 56 in the previous year and 37 in 1913.

Scarlet Fever occurred in 6 parishes, there being 30 cases in all, none of which were fatal. All the cases were of a mild type.

There were five cases of diphtheria, with no deaths, three at Parkham and two at Littleham.

One case of enteric, in a young man of 22, occurred at Buckland Brewer. The patient was removed to the Bideford Hospital, where he died. There was no spread of the disease. In December, 1911, two cases of enteric were notified from the same cottage as the above. On that occasion the disease was traced to Bideford. The cottage was vacated soon after the death and remains unoccupied. It has been renovated and a slop water drain laid.

Whooping Cough was very prevalent at Newton St. Petrock and other parts of the district towards the end of the year.

A case of Cerebro Spinal Meningitis occurred in a woman aged 53, at Clovelly, causing her death. The origin of the case was not apparent. The patient's bedding was burnt and every precaution taken and no further case occurred. No post-mortem was held nor pathological examination made.

Tuberculosis. Four cases of pulmonary tuberculosis were notified as against seven in the previous year. They occurred in the parishes of Alwington, Abbotsham, Buckland Brewer and Woolsery, respectively. All the cases have been visited and provided with sputum bottles, leaflets of instructions, &c. The premises where the cases occurred were in good sanitary condition and the patients isolated as far as possible.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Births. There were 135 births registered in the district during the year, and one which occurred out of the district, but which properly belongs to it, making 136 births altogether, an increase of 18 on the two previous years. Of these 70 were boys and 66 girls, 10 were illegitimate. The birthrate for 1915 is 21.5.

Deaths. There were 78 deaths registered as having actually occurred within the district. Of these, one was of a person usually resident elsewhere. There were 12 deaths of persons usually resident in the district, who died elsewhere, making the nett deaths belonging to the district 89—47 males and 42 females—compared with 79 in 1914. The death rate for the year is 14.5 as compared with 12.5 for the previous year. This rate is calculated on the basis of the estimate of population supplied by the Registrar General.

As usual, the greatest number of deaths were of old people—52 occurring in persons over 65 years of age. 14 deaths were due to heart disease ; 6 to cancer, as against 10 in the previous year and 9 in 1913 ; 5 to phthisis. Three deaths were of sailors, washed up on the shore at Hartland, whose usual place of residence it was impossible to discover. There was one death from Cerebro Spinal Meningitis.

INFANT MORTALITY.

The infant death rate for 1915 again shows a decrease, being 58.8 compared with 67.7 for 1914, 93.2 for 1913, 132.2 for 1912. This is the smallest infant death rate since 1909. The actual number of deaths under one year was eight—the same as last year ; but the number of births was 136 as compared with 118, which gives the rate as above.

TABLE I.

VITAL STATISTICS OF WHOLE DISTRICT DURING 1915 AND PREVIOUS YEARS.

Year.	Population estimated to Middle of each Year	Births.		Total Deaths Registered in the District.		Transferable Deaths.		Nett Deaths belonging to the District.				
		Un-corrected Number.	Nett. Number. Rate.	Number.	Rate.	of Non-residents not registered in the District.	of Residents registered in the District.	Under 1 Year of Age.		At all Ages.		
								Number.	Rate.	Number.	Rate per 1,000 Net Births.	Number.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1910	6182		138	22.3	81			4	16	115.9	85	13.7
1911	6306	147	149	23.6	71	11.2		13	14	96.1	84	13.3
1912	6306	119	121	19.1	75	11.8		8	16	132.2	83	13.1
1913	6306	118	118	18.7	75	11.8	2	7	11	93.2	80	12.6
1914	6306	118	118	18.7	71	11.2	1	9	8	67.7	79	12.5
1915	6103	135	136	21.5	78	12.3	1	12	8	58.8	89	14.5

Area of district, 53,775 acres.

Total population at all ages, 6,306.

Number of inhabited houses, 1,472.

} at Census of 1911

TABLE III.

CAUSES OF, AND AGES AT DEATH DURING THE YEAR 1915.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Nett Deaths at the subjoined ages of "Residents" whether occurring within or without the District.								Total Deaths whether of 'Residents' or 'Non-Residents' in institutions in the District.
	All Ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 2 years.	2 and under 5 years.	5 and under 15 years.	15 and under 25 years.	25 and under 45 years.	45 and under 65 years.	65 and upwards.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Enteric Fever ...	1					1			
Influenza ...	4					1			3
Phthisis (Pulmonary Tuberculosis) ...	5	1				1	2	1	
Tuberculous Meningitis	1					1			
Cancer, malignant disease	6							3	3
Meningitis ...	1								
Organic Heart Disease...	14						1		9
Bronchitis ...	8								8
Pneumonia (all forms) ...	3	1					1		1
Other diseases of respiratory organs ...	1								1
Diarrhœa and Enteritis	1								1
Appendicitis & Typhlitis	1								1
Nephritis & Bright's Disease	7					1		1	5
Congenital Debility and Malformation, including Premature Birth ...	5	5							
Violent Deaths, excluding Suicide ...	5		1			1	3		
Suicide	1								
Other defined diseases ...	1							1	
Diseases ill-defined or unknown ...	24	1						3	20
TOTALS ...	89	8	1			6	7	15	52

* Three of these were of bodies (sailors) washed up on Hartland Beach—Unidentified.



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TABLE II.

CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE NOTIFIED DURING THE YEAR 1915.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	NUMBER OF CASES NOTIFIED.							Total Cases Removed to Hospital
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.						
		Under 1	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 45.	45 to 65.	
Diphtheria (including Membranous Croup). No age given in two cases ...	5			2	1			
Erysipelas	1							
Scarlet Fever. No age given in three cases...	30		4	21	2			
Enteric Fever	1				1			
Puerperal fever	2				1			
Cerebro-spinal Meningitis ...	1						1	
Pulmonary Tuberculosis ...	4				1	2	1	
Totals	44		4	23	6	2	2	

TOTAL CASES NOTIFIED IN EACH LOCALITY.—Hartland 11 ; Woolsery, 5 ; Clovelly, 6 ; Parkham and Alwington, 11 ; Buckland Brewer and East Putford, 7 ; Monkleigh, 1 ; Littleham, Landcross and Abbotsham, 3.

TABLE IV.
INFANT MORTALITY.
1915. Nett Deaths from stated causes at various Ages under 1 Year of Age.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Under 1 week.					1-2 weeks.	2-3 weeks.	3-4 weeks.	Total under 4 weeks	4 weeks and under 3 months	3-6 months.	6-9 months.	9-12 months.	Total Deaths under 1 year.
Tuberculosis									1		1
Convulsions							1				1
Pneumonia (all forms)								1			1
Premature birth	4		1			5					5
Totals	4	1				5	1	1	1		8

Net Births in the year—Legitimate, 126 ; Illegitimate, 10.
Deaths in the year—Legitimate, 5 ; Illegitimate, 3.